

HOFFMANN, Emil + Fridolin

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INFORMATION REPORT

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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COUNTRY West Germany/Czechoslovakia REPORT NO. CS-311/02029-65
SUBJECT Attempt to Arrange Informal German/Czech DATE DISTR. 16 FEB 1966
Discussions in West Berlin NO. PAGES 2
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DATE OF INFO. 18 January 1965

PLACE & DATE ACQ Germany, Berlin (21 January 1965)

FIELD REPORT NO. EGB-22641

THIS IS UNEVALUATED INFORMATION. SOURCE GRADINGS ARE DEFINITIVE. APPRAISAL OF CONTENT IS TENTATIVE.

SOURCE Telephone intercept (XB) in German to East Berlin.

Appraisal of Content: 2.

- On 9 January, Acting Chief of the Czechoslovak Military Mission in West Berlin, Oldrich Krepek, held an informal discussion with West Berlin businessman and East-West trader Dr. Emil Fridolin Hoffmann. Their principal concern appeared to be how to arrange unofficial talks between West Germans and Czech officials on the subject of trade. Asked whether he had "forgotten" the possibility previously discussed with respect to the coming week (a Bundestag work week in Berlin) Hoffmann assured Krepek that he had not forgotten. He said that, in fact, he was already working on it and "there would be a meeting with (Willy Max) Rademacher for sure". Hoffmann did not know who else would be involved, but he was working on several possibilities. Krepek pointed out that "if it were possible to include (Fritz) Erler, then it would really be fine". Hoffmann agreed, but said that, while he had written to Erler inviting him to take part, he had not, as yet, received a reply. He added that he would telephone Erler as soon as Erler arrived in Berlin and would let Krepek know the results of this call.
- Hoffmann then said that (Hermann) Schwann was already in town and that while Schwann was not himself a member of the Bundestag, he was "nonetheless a name of considerable renown". Hoffmann said that he was meeting with Schwann and (East-West trader) Otto Haffner "this afternoon". Hoffmann invited Krepek to take part, but Krepek had a previous engagement.
- Hoffmann then mentioned he had also written to (Justice Minister Dr. Ewald) Bucher, inviting him to sit in on the discussion, but Bucher had written back that he would be unable to attend because he would be in Tunis holding a series of discussions with the Tunisian Minister of Justice. Krepek said that he had "seen something" about Bucher's trip in the newspapers. The conversation ended with Hoffmann reassuring Krepek he would do his best to arrange for Erler to be present at the discussion, which would probably take place on 12 January.

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4. In a subsequent conversation Hoffmann remarked that the above mentioned discussion finally took place at his home the evening of 13 January. Rademacher, Krepelak and Hoffmann were among those present.
5. Hoffmann and Krepelak held another brief discussion on 18 January, during which Hoffmann indicated he would be leaving for Prague on 26 January and hoped a decision could be reached by then as to whether or not he would get an audience with Czech Minister of Foreign Trade (Frantisek) Hamouz. Krepelak said he had received no word as yet, but promised to telephone Prague on the matter.

Field Comment. East-West traders, who are used by Soviet and East European officials to provide contact to Federal Republic political circles, often exaggerate the significance of their political contacts when describing them to Bloc officials. Apparently Hoffmann did so. Former Bundestag member Schwann is a man of more renown than importance. Presumably Erler and Bucher did not take Hoffmann's invitation seriously, although Rademacher, an inveterate promoter of East-West trade, logically would have attended. Such Czech promotion of discussions in West Berlin with ranking politicians has not been previously noted. The Otto Haffner mentioned in paragraph 2 is known for attempts to promote Soviet trade in West Berlin, in particular through the Helios Handelszentrale, a firm closed by the Senat, at Allied request, because of Soviet participation. Of late, Haffner has been hinting to West German businessmen that he can arrange large deals with the Soviet Union, but apparently not through the Handelszentrale. Arrangements for the removal of telephone equipment from the sealed offices of that firm have been made for 29 January.

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